



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/new-report-analyzes-what-we%E2%80%99ve-learned-feed-future-program-evaluations-so-far>

## New Report Analyzes What We've Learned from Feed the Future Program Evaluations So Far

Since its inception, Feed the Future has worked to reach smallholder farmers and rural communities mired in poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in developing countries to equip them with better tools, knowledge, and opportunities. In 2011, we created a [Learning Agenda](#) to ask and answer questions that help us identify the most efficient and effective ways our projects have helped communities create a brighter future through farming and agriculture.

With a better understanding of what works and why, we are able to calibrate our programs and develop best practices to share with others who do similar work. That way, we can learn from each other, hone our approach, and – ultimately – make the best use possible of the limited dollars we have to invest in global food security.

Today, we are achieving meaningful [progress](#) through hundreds of Feed the Future projects around the globe. For many of these programs, performance and impact evaluations have helped us collect results and gauge our preliminary impact. We recently developed an inventory of these program evaluations conducted between 2010 and 2015 across 64 countries by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The inventory of nearly 200 evaluations is useful as a standalone tool, but the evaluations also hold valuable information to increase our understanding of what works best for boosting food security and nutrition. So, as we took stock of the Feed the Future evaluations available, we also decided to synthesize the findings to draw out what we've learned from them so far. We turned to our Learning Agenda to guide this exercise and used its six themes (in areas like women's empowerment, nutrition, and agricultural productivity) and corresponding questions as a framework for our analysis.

The resulting report and inventory—published this week on [Agrilinks.org](#)—can serve as a valuable tool for all of us working to improve food security around the world. Continue reading to learn more about the initial trends and patterns our synthesis uncovered.

### ***The report's findings point to a powerful truth: In development, people and relationships matter most.***

The synthesis found that one of the key drivers of success for Feed the Future was the strength of social capital. When our development programs leveraged **strong community relationships** and trusted and transparent community-based organizations, they were better able to achieve their objectives such as building resilience, expanding markets, closing gender gaps, and lifting vulnerable people out of poverty.

Programs also saw better results when they sought to **empower people to take ownership** of their own advancement. Promoting agency and decision-making power among program participants can change how people see themselves and their opportunities, enabling more lasting change.

Additional common elements of successful development programs included:

- Large-scale impact in reducing poverty and hunger requires a **long-term effort**. Successful programs invest in research and development—which, by nature, are longer-term—and promote coordination among partners.
- For programs that sought to help farmers increase agricultural productivity, we found that success often hinged on **farmers' access** to markets and farm inputs. When a farmer has quality seed and reliable markets to sell her harvest to, she is more likely to increase her productivity.
- Evaluations universally cited **access to assets**, such as land, as a constraint to women's empowerment in agriculture. Access to assets is not only critical to women's social and economic empowerment, but the health and welfare of families and communities, too.

- When projects integrate **quality training** as part of their activities with a community, they can lead not only to successful change, but lasting change.

Check out this infographic for all six of these common traits of successful Feed the Future projects, based on our findings in this report. These are by no way definitive, but point to encouraging, emerging trends in best practice in food security development programs.



**FEED THE FUTURE**

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

# 6 COMMON TRAITS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Here's what we discovered after analyzing nearly 200 evaluations of development programs that are part of the Feed the Future initiative.



**1 COMMUNITY**  
Results improve when programs involve trusted and transparent community organizations.

**2 EMPOWERMENT**  
When programs enable people to take ownership of their own advancement, they produce better results.



**3 TIME**  
Large-scale impact in reducing poverty and hunger requires long-term effort, including investing in research and development.

**4 ACCESS**  
Increasing agricultural productivity often hinges on farmers' access to markets and farm inputs like seeds.



**5 ASSETS**  
Access to assets, from land to income, is critical to women's economic and social empowerment as well as the health and welfare of families and communities.

**6 TRAINING**  
When integrated as part of a project, quality training leads to success and lasting change.



Check out our full evaluation synthesis report for more findings at

[www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov)

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By taking stock of where we're at with evaluations and our Learning Agenda, the report highlighted a couple challenges and opportunities worth considering:

- Given that we started implementing programs in 2010, Feed the Future is generally still too young to comprehensively assess the long-term impacts of our programs across the areas where we focus our work. That will take time and our monitoring and evaluation plans reflect that. We've recently wrapped up a second round of data collection in our Feed the Future focus countries to determine what impact we've had thus far, and we have another set planned for 2017 to collect a third data point to measure impact. Stay tuned for more data this year!
- We also do not evaluate our programs based exclusively on the Learning Agenda questions, which are critical questions to answer but do not represent everything we need to learn about our programs through evaluations. Measuring impact requires a long-term effort, so in the interim we're examining what existing evaluations can tell us about these questions now. This means that some of our questions, like *"What types of interventions have attracted private sector investment in agriculture?"* remain unanswered until we have more data on more programs over a longer period of time. This synthesis serves as a useful tool for determining which areas may need additional or deeper research, in addition to the impact evaluations we have already planned around the Learning Agenda questions.

## Now what?

So what do we do with this information now that we have it? We use it to reflect on our own programs, how they are designed, and how we might modify Feed the Future programming to even more efficiently deliver on the results we seek. The report also gives us the information we need to review our Learning Agenda to see if we're asking the right questions and what modifications we might need or want to make as we seek to reduce the gaps in the world's understanding of what works best in food security development programs.

We're also sharing the report publicly, so other development practitioners can learn with us. The second half of the synthesis report includes the inventory- along with links to their full reports - of the performance and impact evaluations reviewed if you'd like to dig deeper into any.

Check back with the [Agrilinks blog](#) too for posts from food security development experts as they examine and explain the findings.

As a successful interagency initiative, we have accomplished a lot toward our goals of reducing poverty and malnutrition around the world. We also have a lot to learn from these accomplishments. This report shares some of the key lessons that we have learned. Its findings will contribute to the improvement of food security development practices and help Feed the Future continue to maximize results.

To learn more, read the full [Feed the Future Evaluation Synthesis Report](#).

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